



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ecological Services
Colorado Field Office
755 Parfet Street, Suite 361
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

IN REPLY REFER TO:
ES/CO: T&E/PMJM
Mail Stop 65412

Steve Dougherty
ERO Resources
1842 Clarkson Street
Denver, CO 80218

Dear Mr. Dougherty:

Based on the authority conferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) by the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the Service has reviewed your recent submittal on behalf of the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District regarding a proposed "block clearance" for the federally-listed threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse, *Zapus hudsonius preblei*, (Preble's) within a designated portion of the Denver metro area. The Service concurs with your conclusion that designation of a "block clearance" zone, as you have proposed and depicted on the map of May 16, 2000, which was included with your submittal, is appropriate. A "block-clearance" zone is one in which the Service has determined that the species in question is no longer likely to exist.

The Service's Interim Survey Guidelines for the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse (May 21, 1999) recommend that habitat assessments or trapping surveys be conducted in potentially suitable habitats in the affected counties to assure compliance with the ESA. In designating a block clearance zone the Service eliminates the need for individuals or agencies to coordinate with the Service prior to conducting activities in habitats that otherwise would be deemed to have potential to support Preble's. The establishment of this block clearance zone is based on the likely absence of Preble's within the area and in no way precludes the Service from designating critical habitat within this zone. However, there currently appears little likelihood that the area would include rivers, streams, or riparian areas that are critical habitat, or that would be of importance in any future plan to recover of the species.

The Service bases this clearance on a series of factors that were evaluated in your proposal. They include numerous negative trapping surveys and habitat assessments within this area in recent years. Since 1997, well over 300 trappings surveys within the area failed to locate Preble's. In addition to review by the Service, the proposed clearance was reviewed by biologists from the Colorado Division of Wildlife, members of the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse Technical Working Group, the Colorado Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse Science Advisory Team, and the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse Recovery Team.

Effective the date of this letter, the block clearance zone will be in effect for a period of 3 years. After three years the Service will review the clearance, any additional information, and renew the clearance as deemed appropriate. Based

on additional information, the clearance zone may be expanded or adjusted periodically. We plan to have maps of the block clearance zone available on our web site (www.r6.fws.gov/preble) and at our office.

Should the Preble's be discovered within the block clearance zone it would be subject to full protection under the Act and the Service would consider modification of the zone as appropriate.

The Service emphasizes that while wetlands and riparian habitats within the block clearance zone do not support the Preble's, they should be conserved and enhanced for other values including fish and wildlife habitat, flood control, and maintenance of water quality.

If the Service can be of further assistance, please contact Peter Plage of my staff at (303) 275-2370.

Sincerely,

[*SIGNED*]

LeRoy W. Carlson
Colorado Field Supervisor

cc: U.S. Army COE, Littleton, CO
Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver, CO (D. Weber)
All consultants working on Preble's in CO
Plage

Reference: Peter/PMJM/DenverBC